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Home Health Plays Critical Role in Patient Medication Adherence

New England Healthcare Institute Study Reports Health Care Teams Could Help Save Billions

Boston, MA – Creating “health care teams,” including home health workers, to increase the follow-up patients receive is cited as one solution to improve medication adherence, a lack of which costs the nation’s healthcare system \$290 billion in avoidable expenses every year, according to a study by the New England Healthcare Institute (NEHI).

NEHI conducted the study “*Thinking Outside the Pillbox: A System-wide Approach to Improving Patient Medication Adherence for Chronic Disease*,” which found that the billions of lost dollars come in the form of unnecessary hospitalizations and increased medical risks for the one-third to one-half of all patients who do not take their medications properly. According to one study of diabetes and heart disease patients cited by NEHI, mortality rates among patients who did not adhere to their medications were nearly double the rates of those who took their medications as prescribed.

Adding a health care team of care managers, pharmacists and others in addition to home health staff adds another way in which the home health industry could save money for taxpayers and the healthcare system. The Home Care Alliance of Massachusetts, which represents nearly 160 home health agencies and visiting nurse associations across Massachusetts, believes this study underscores the importance of home health’s ability to reduce unnecessary and expensive inpatient care.

“We hope policymakers take a good look at the NEHI study and seriously consider the potential cost-savings in better managing patients who do not always adhere to their prescriptions,” said Home Care Alliance Executive Director Patricia Kelleher. “The Alliance is proud to represent the home health workers who play a pivotal role in patient medication management.”

Other solutions addressed in the NEHI study included patient engagement and education, payment reform where positive outcomes would be rewarded, and leveraging health information technologies like electronic health records. To find out more about the study, visit <http://www.nehi.net/>.

About the Home Care Alliance:

With a mission to unite people and organizations to advance community health through care and services in the home, the Home Care Alliance of Massachusetts is a non-profit trade association and advocacy group providing representation, education, communication, advocacy and – ultimately – a voice for the state’s home health industry. Founded in 1969, the Alliance is celebrating its 40th year in existence. To learn more, visit www.thinkhomecare.org.

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